



THE MONOGRAPH SERIES

RECORDS OF EARLY AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE
AS SOURCE MATERIAL

EDITED BY RUSSELL F. WHITEHEAD, A.I.A.

VOLUME XX

MONOGRAPH TWO

EARLY BRICKWORK IN NEW ENGLAND

BY FRANK CHOUTEAU BROWN

Measured Drawings by the Author

Photographs by Arthur C. Haskell

One of the first references to brickmaking in New England occurs in "New England's Plantation; or a short and true Description of the Commodities and Discommodities of that countrey. Written in the year 1629 by Mr. Higgeson, a Reverend Divine, now there resident." In that year he writes of the "clay soyle—all about our plantation at Salem, for so our towne is now named, Psal 76.2." He continues, "It is thought here is a good clay to make bricke and tyles and earthen-pot as need to be. At this instant we are setting a brick-kill on worke to make bricke and tyles for the building of our houses."

On the 23rd of August, 1630, "at the First Court of Assistants holden at Charlton (Charlestown), it was ordered that carpenters, joyners, bricklayers, sawyers and thatchers shall not take aboue 2 s/ a day, nor any man shall giue more, under paine of 10 s/ to taker and guier." (This from the Records of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay in New England.) In Boston, in 1636, Thomas Mount was granted a piece of marsh "for the making of brick in," and "to Jaspas Rawlines," in 1644, was granted "use of a rood of upland for the making of Brickes." Of William Coddington's Boston house, which was probably patterned after some building in his own home town of Boston in Lancashire, he says, "Before Boston was named, I built the first good house," and of it Winsor writes, "Nor were there lacking mansions of more pretensions at the early time. When Coddington went from Boston to found his Colony of Rhode Island he had already built there a brick house, which, when

old, he still remembered as a token of his former magnificence."

An order issued on the 31st day of the 3rd month of 1658 by the General Court has especial interest in this connection; "Whereas Jno Conny was prohibited to burne bricke in his lott behind his house, and yett notwithstanding hath presumed to sett his kilne, Itt is ordered that in case he fire the kilne he shall pay ten shillings a day as a fine during the fire being in itt." In 1660 another order of the General Court is recorded, to give "Richard Gridley and ye rest of ye brickmakers in town . . . with what land may bee fitt for their use in ye most convenient place"—on Boston Common!

On May 28, 1679, an order of the General Court was enacted, in Boston, as follows:—"It is ordered by this Court & authority thereof, that clay to make bricks shall be digged before the 1st of November, & turned ouer in the moneth of February & March ensuing, a moneth before it is wrought, and that no person temper their bricks with salt water or brackish, and that the size of bricks be nine inches long, two & one quarter inches thicke & fower & a halfe inches broad, and that all moulds vsed for making bricke be made according to these sizes, and well shod with iron, & what person or persons soeuer shall make bricks in any respect contrary to this oeder, in the seuerall particulars of it, shall forfeite the one halfe of such bricks to the vse of the beauty of the toune where they are made." The law enacted in England in 1625, the first year of Charles I, established the

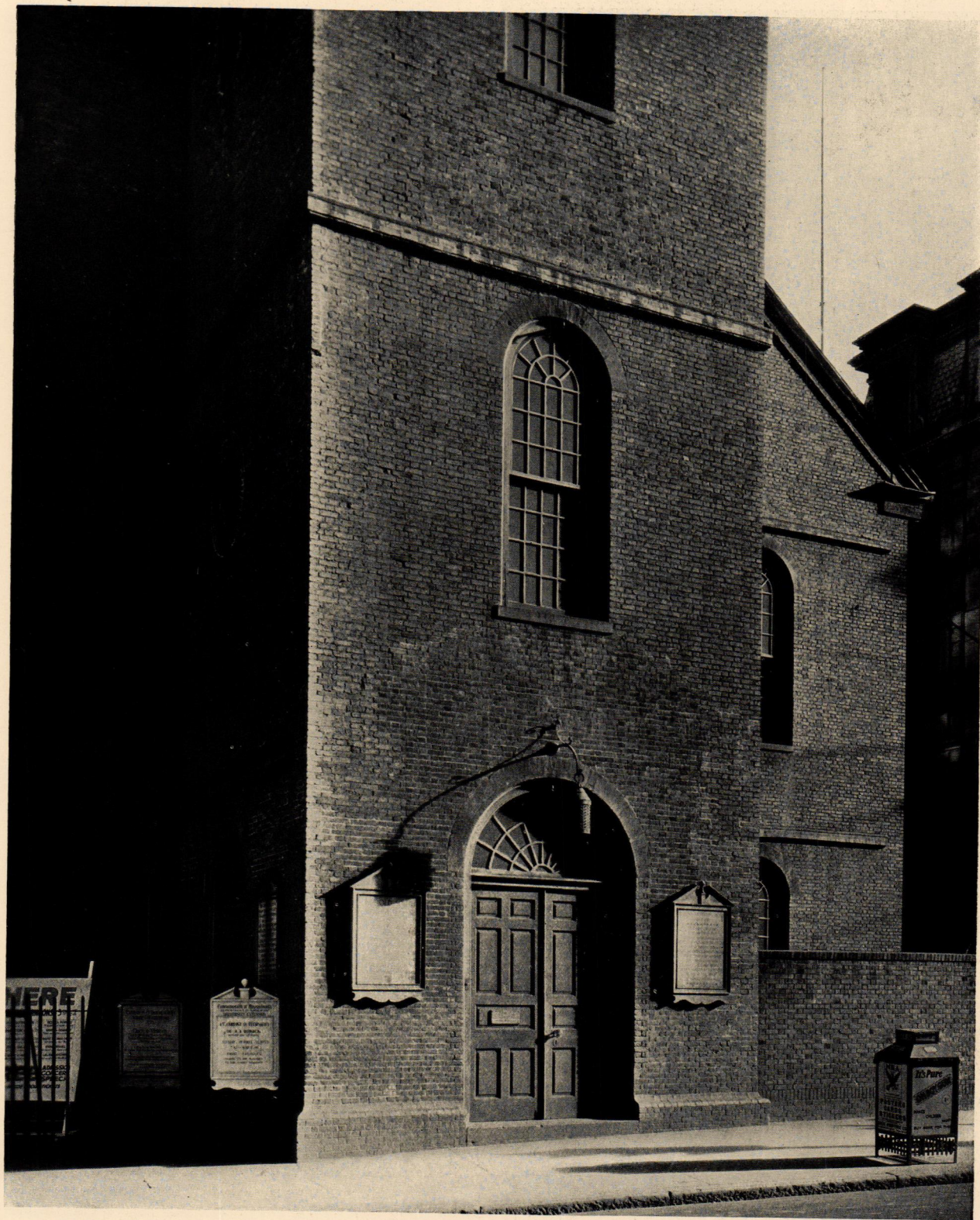
[113]



CHRIST CHURCH—"THE OLD NORTH"—1723—SALEM STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

*The bricks vary from $7\frac{3}{4}$ " to $8\frac{1}{4}$ " \times $3\frac{5}{8}$ " to $3\frac{7}{8}$ " \times $1\frac{3}{4}$ " to $1\frac{7}{8}$ ", laid English bond with joints about $\frac{3}{8}$ " wide.
5 courses to 11 inches of height*

[114]



THE "OLD SOUTH" MEETING HOUSE—1729—WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON, MASS.
*The bricks are 8" x 3¾" x 2", laid Flemish bond with ⅜" joint.
 5 courses to 12 inches of height*

[115]



Detail of Brick Bond

JOSEPH PEASLEE GARRISON—1675—
ROCK VILLAGE, MASSACHUSETTS

legal sizes of the English brick as 9" x 4½" x 3".

Following after the "great fires" in Boston's early history, 1653, 1676, and 1679, it was ordered that no dwelling houses "except of stone and bricke, and couered with slate or tyle" be allowed to be built; an order which was modified in the following spring, establishing three years of grace, because of the poverty of those who had lost their property during the fire.

Most old architecture of the New England cities (where the houses were usually located—rather than in the country, as they were through the South) has suffered either through fire, or prosperity. Many brick buildings have survived the former, but fallen before the latter enemy, that has been the cause of the demolition of many an unusual and unique structure. The "Old Brick Church," dedicated in Boston on May 3, 1713, for instance; a square structure, three stories high, with a two-story entrance vestibule; and the most costly house of worship built in this country up to that time, it was torn down in 1808.

Two of the earliest remaining church structures in Boston are Christ Church, better known perhaps as the "Old North," and the "Old South Meeting House." The "Old North" was built in 1723, 50 by 70 feet, and the spire of the tower, originally 191

feet tall, was blown down in 1804, and replaced, at a slightly smaller size, by Charles Bulfinch, to a height of 175 feet. Services are still maintained in Christ Church, as they have been, continuously, except through the brief period when interrupted by the occupancy of the British forces.

The "Old South," built a few years after the "Old North," in 1729, by one Joshua Blanchard, a Master Mason, who also built the first Faneuil Hall in 1742, is now kept open as a Museum, though occasionally used for special meetings, to which its Meeting house plan, with the pulpit high upon one long side and balconies around the other three, is especially adapted.

The Hall built by Peter Faneuil, originally in 1742, from plans by the painter John Smibert, at 40 by 100 feet and two stories high, was burned out in 1761, and rebuilt within the old walls by 1763, from the proceeds of a lottery authorized by the General Court. In 1805-6 it was enlarged by Charles Bulfinch to its present size, 80 x 100 feet, and increased in height. The older part—that along the south side, from which the detailed photograph showing the windows is taken—extends up to the top of the entablature over the second-story windows, the wall above that point being of the 1805-6 construction. The changed nature of



Detail of Brick Bond

OLD STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

[116]



OLD STATE HOUSE—1713-1747—HEAD OF STATE STREET, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

*The bricks are $8\frac{1}{8}" \times 3\frac{3}{4}" \times 2\frac{1}{4}"$ laid in English bond with $\frac{1}{2}"$ joint.
5 courses in about $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches of height*

[117]



Detail of Brickwork
POWDER HOUSE, MARBLEHEAD, MASS.

the brickwork is most apparent upon the two ends; the later brick being smoother and lighter in color, and lacking the dark headers of the earlier walls. The sizes are also different.

The oldest "Town House" in Boston was of wood, built in 1657. It was burned in the fire of 1711, and was replaced by a building of brick, finished in 1713. The interior was again burned out in 1747, and its old walls were incorporated into the present "Old State House" at the head of State Street. Both the bricks and the joints are unusually rough in texture; the oldest joints being worn deep behind the brick face.

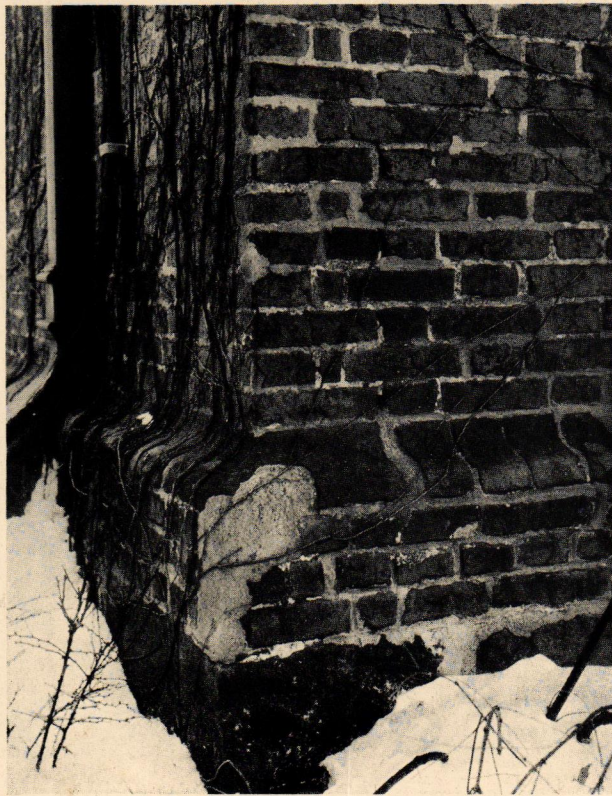
Medford, originally known as "Mistick," was founded in 1630—or possibly 1629—by Matthew Craddock, elected first Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony in London on May 13, 1629. He never left England, but two of the ships which sailed with the "Arbella" in 1630 belonged to Craddock—the "Ambrose" and the "Jewel," and he may have sent them to Medford at the suggestion of Governor Winthrop, whose Ten Hills Plantation was there.

The early records of Medford have been lost, and so the earliest report concerned with local brickmaking dates only from 1660, when a conveyance of land in West Medford—south of Boston Avenue and between

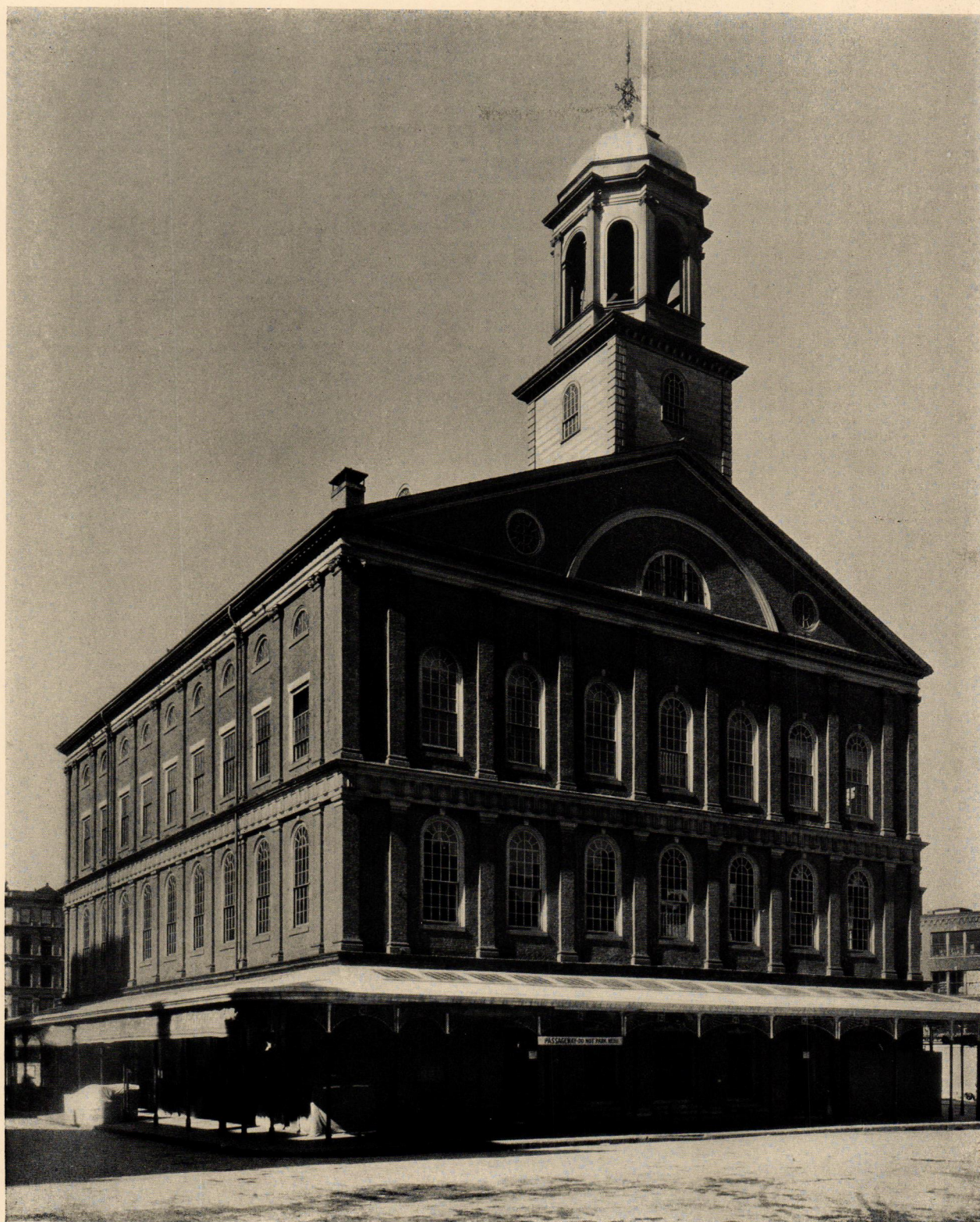
Arlington Street and the river—is described as being "adjoining to Thomas Eames clay lands." Bricks from this yard sold in 1750 for 10 shillings per thousand, and in 1760 at 15 shillings. By 1795, the price had risen to four dollars; while in 1777 Medford's other—and even more famous—product could be bought for 3s.6d the gallon! Bricks were made as late as the middle of the eighteenth century on the "Brickyard Pasture," north of Dr. Tufts House.

Not only was Medford famous for its brick for many years (during the Revolution the Selectmen petitioned for help from Boston and Charlestown because "the business of Medford, being largely that of brickmaking," it had been badly damaged by the blockade) but it had led many other towns in establishing the industry. Jeremiah Page, for instance, who started brickmaking in Danvers, was born in Medford in 1722 from whence he removed to what is still known as the Col. Jeremiah Page House in Danvers.

In Medford, where the pressure of later growth has not been so great, several quite early examples of brick dwellings have been preserved down to the present day. Of these the earliest and most important is probably the variously titled Craddock or Peter Tufts House, on Riverside Avenue, formerly Ship Street,



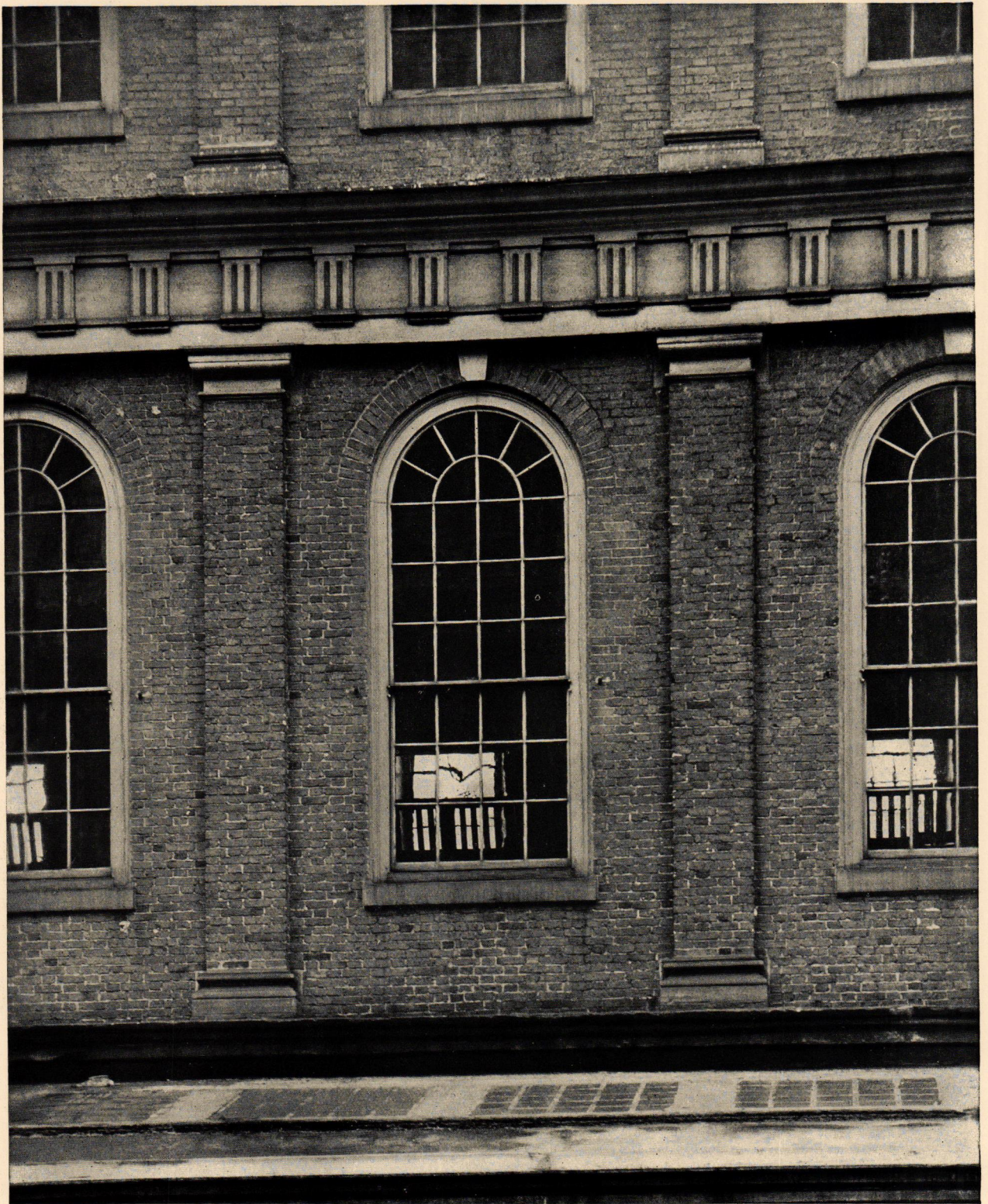
Detail of Brickwork
MASSACHUSETTS HALL, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.



FANEUIL HALL (1742) ENLARGED BY CHARLES BULFINCH—1805-6—BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

*Old bricks are $7\frac{1}{8}$ " x $3\frac{3}{8}$ " x 2" laid Flemish bond with $\frac{3}{8}$ " joint.
5 courses in $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches of height*

[119]



SOUTH SIDE—FANEUIL HALL—1742—BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

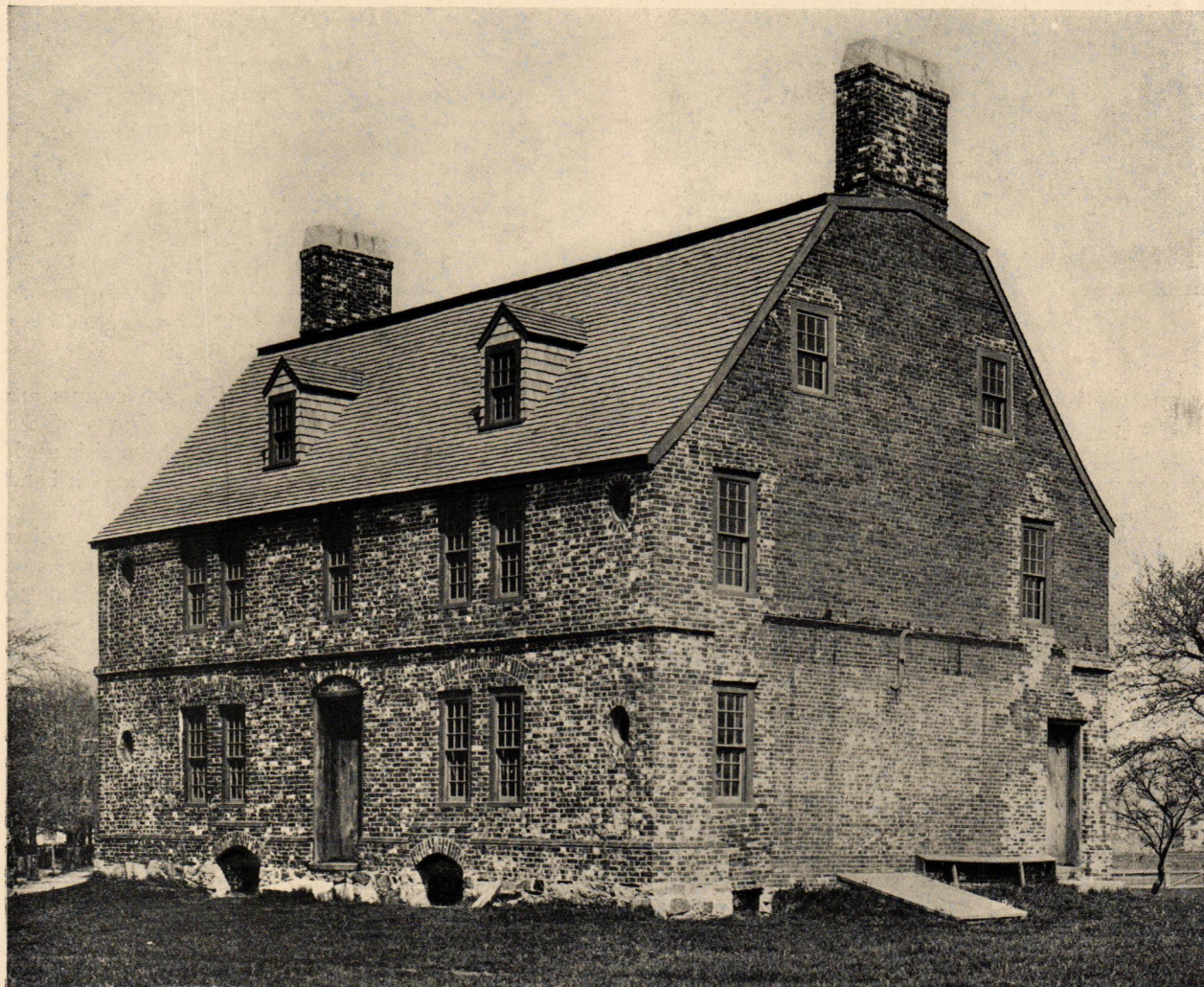
[120]

once ascribed to 1634, but now believed to have been built in 1682. The bricks vary from 8 to 8¼ inches long, from 4 to 4½ inches wide, and from 2 to 3 inches thick, and are the same color as bricks afterward made in East Medford; so, although the material is often stated as "brought from England as ballast," it is far more probably of local make.

The house usually now known as the "Garrison House," just back of Medford Square, was built by

was bought by Isaac Royall after John Usher's death in 1726, and was then a house of two-story height, about 45 by 18 feet, with a center door and end chimneys, the original walls still showing on the ends and west side.

The date usually given to the first house built upon this site by Lieutenant Governor Usher is 1690; and the lower front part of the end wall shown in the photograph probably dates from about that time; which



Photo, The Halliday Historic Co.

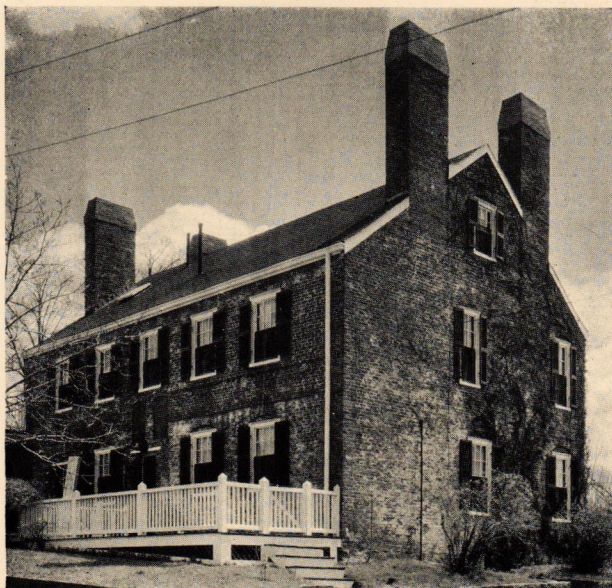
THE "TUFTS-CRADDOCK HOUSE"—1668—MEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

Major Jonathan Wade probably between 1683 and 1689. It was originally smaller than at present, and has been several times altered—a statement that is also true of the Craddock or Tufts House.

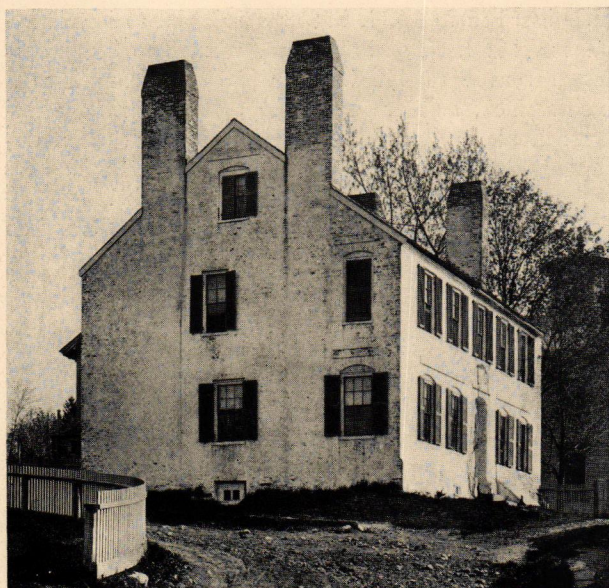
The old "Royall House" includes, as part of its present structure, a house that may have been built by Gov. Winthrop for his dwelling at his "Ten Hills Farm." It appears on a plan made in 1697 and was probably erected ten years or so before that date. It

theory is substantiated by its being laid in English Bond, the favorite method for early brickwork in New England. Following his purchase of the house, it was rebuilt in 1738, "after the model of a Nobleman's House in Antigua," where the Royalist, Col. Royall, had a summer Plantation. It was enlarged to two rooms in depth and raised to three stories height, either in one or two operations. There is a record of Col. Royall having bought brick, in 1750,

[121]



Recent photograph showing alterations



An old photograph in The Halliday Historic Collection

THE JONATHAN WADE HOUSE—1683-89—MEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

from "the Brickyard Pasture . . . north of Dr. Tufts House"; and it may have been that the house was increased in height to three stories, possibly with a leanto or other type of extension at the rear; and later rebuilt to its present size—with the front away from the present street, which was originally the principal entrance to the house, that side fronting upon a stone-paved Carriage Court, enclosed by a fence with imposing posts and railing upon the side opposite the house, beyond which was the formal garden.

While other brick houses in Medford are old, they are all much later than those briefly described; many having been built by the Hall family of which three still remain, side by side, on Main Street; only a short distance from the Jonathan Wade residence—probably built between 1683 and 89—itsself enlarged and rebuilt to its present size by another member of the Hall family, one Benjamin, about 1785.

It is this same Jonathan Wade house on Pasture Hill Lane in Medford that was supposed to have been the model for the large brick country house Sir Harry Frankland built in Hopkinton—to which he brought his Marblehead love, Agnes Surriage, after his return from Europe, where she had saved his life in the Lisbon earthquake.

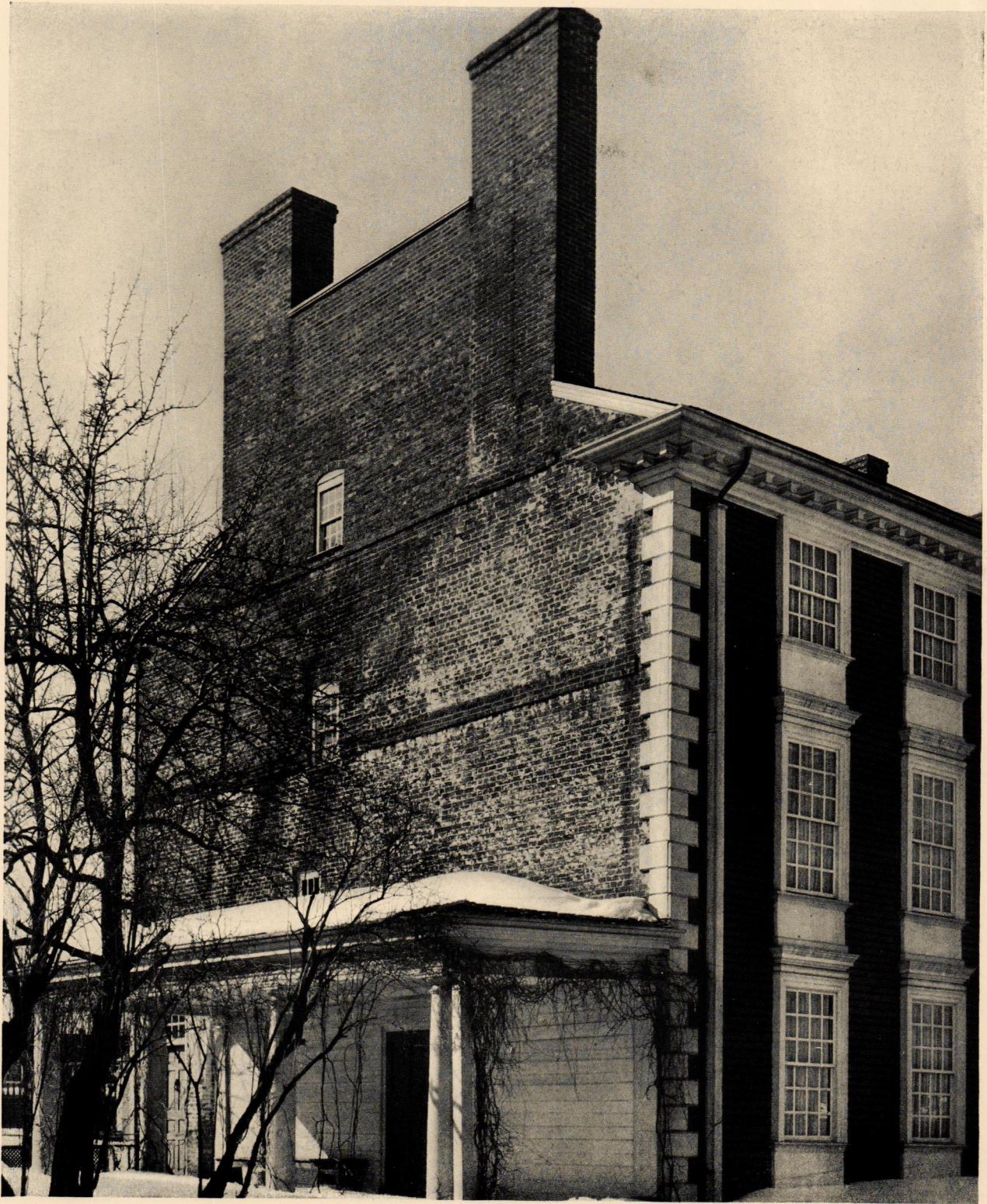
One other nearby center of brick building must also be mentioned, Cambridge. While many of its churches and oldest houses were built of wood; with the exception of its first building, Harvard College had chosen brick for its oldest "Halls." Of these, "Massachusetts," built from the proceeds of a State lottery in 1720, is among the earliest now standing; and of especial interest from its variety in the use of brick bond.

Below the molded brick watertable, the courses are laid in English bond. Upon the two fronts of the building to North and South, a Flemish bond is used, while the East end, particularly, runs in English bond from the line of the lower-story window sills up to the belt at the level of the fourth floor, and above that line the gable is built of brick laid in three courses of stretchers with a course of headers, alternating, up to the chimneys. These treatments are shown in the measured drawing (page 126) which endeavors to combine the end with the front details of the structure. The bricks run about $7\frac{3}{4}$ " to 8" x $3\frac{3}{4}$ " to $3\frac{7}{8}$ " x 2" in size, and are laid about 5 courses to $11\frac{3}{4}$ " in height. The molded brick used in the watertable is laid, reversed, as part of the cornice.

Two of the oldest remaining examples come from the region North of Boston; one being the old house in Greenland, N. H., that undoubtedly dates from an early period, so that the local claim to the date of 1638 may be correct. The brick of which it is built was burned only a short distance away. Locally known as a "Garrison House," it was probably only so used because of the durable material of the walls.

The porch or vestibule on the old Spencer-Pierce-Little House at Newbury, dating from about 1645-50, is of a very crude, roughly dimensioned brick, with many individual pieces either especially made, or else of unusual sizes, while others may have been split or ground down to use in the arches, or other ornamental parts of the composition. It is the gable and treatment of this entrance that—along with the steep pitch of the roof—does so much to suggest the English character of the whole structure. Measured drawing, page 127.

[122]



THE "ROYALL HOUSE"—1690-1738—MEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

[123]



HOLLIS HALL—1763—HARVARD UNIVERSITY, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
*The bricks vary from $7\frac{3}{4}$ " to $7\frac{7}{8}$ " \times $3\frac{1}{2}$ " to $3\frac{3}{8}$ " \times 2" to $2\frac{1}{8}$ " with $\frac{3}{8}$ " joints, laid in English bond.
 5 full courses to $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches of height*

[124]



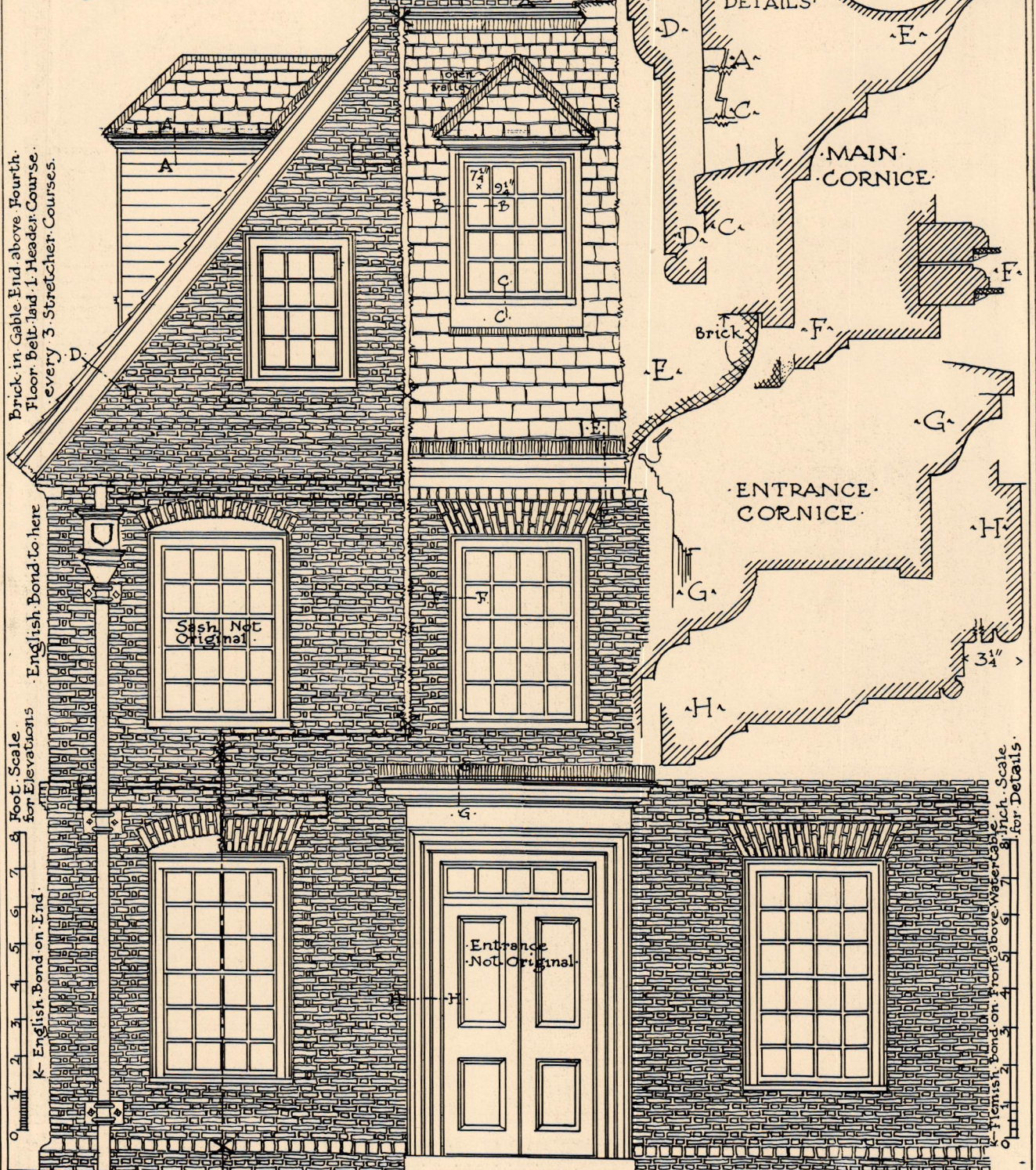
MASSACHUSETTS HALL—1720—HARVARD UNIVERSITY, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
*The bricks vary from $7\frac{3}{4}$ " to 8" x $3\frac{3}{4}$ " to $3\frac{7}{8}$ " x 2" with $\frac{3}{8}$ " joints, laid 5 courses to $11\frac{3}{4}$ inches of height.
 See measured drawing, page 126*

[125]

Measured & Drawn by Frank Chouteau Brown.

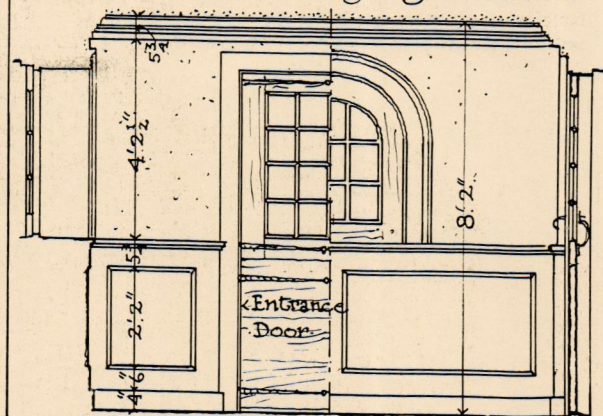
Architect in Boston in March of 1933.

N.B. Portion of Drawing at Left & above Line marked X shows East End Elevation. Portion of the North Front & Entrance shown at Right. The Second Story is omitted also. Bricks vary from $7\frac{3}{4} \times 3\frac{3}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$ to $3\frac{3}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$ with $\frac{3}{8}$ " Joints & laid 5 courses to 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ ".

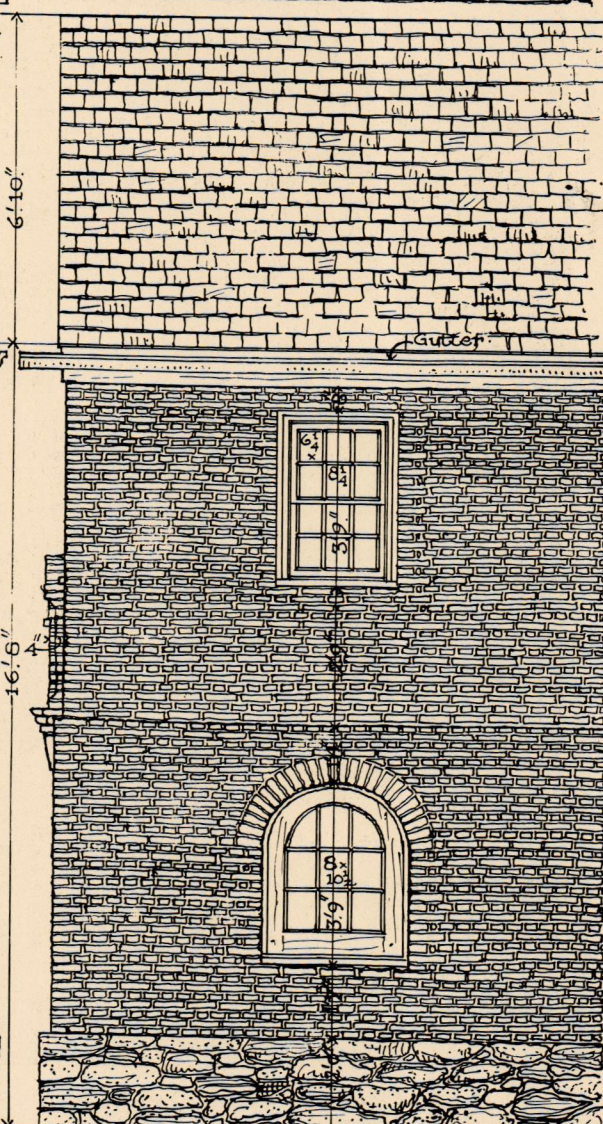


END & ENTRANCE FRONT DETAILS MASSACHUSETTS HALL 1720 HARVARD UNIVERSITY CITY OF CAMBRIDGE MASSACHUSETTS

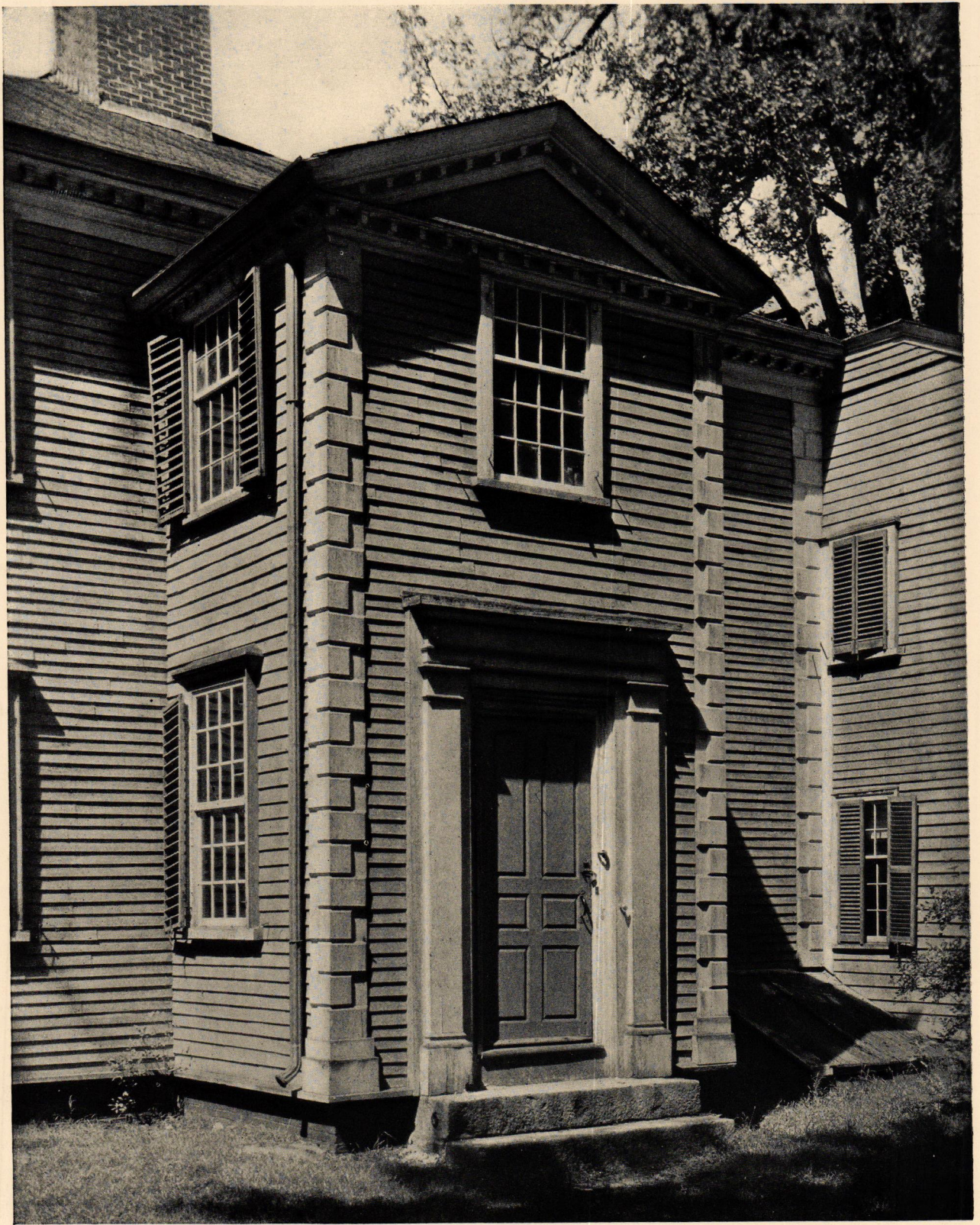
- Bricks vary from $1\frac{3}{4}$ " to $1\frac{7}{8}$ " x $7\frac{1}{2}$ " to 8 " x $3\frac{3}{8}$ " to $3\frac{1}{2}$ ".
- Joints average about $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick with a
- Texture approximating roughness of brick.



Bricks laid in English
Bond and 5 Courses
are equal to $12\frac{1}{4}$ "



ENTRANCE GABLE SPENCER PIERCE LITTLE HOUSE AT
OLD NEWBURY MASSACHUSETTS BUILT ABOUT 1645-50



VESTIBULE, THE PENNIMAN-STEARN'S HOUSE, BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

Reuben Duren, Architect

[128]